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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003021

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV PINR IZ

SUBJECT: NEW CASES OF APPARENT ABUSES RAISE MORE SUNNI ARAB COMPLAINTS AGAINST INTERIOR MINISTRY

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2025

1B. BAGHDAD 2120

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Sunni community is alleging that the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) Commando Unit is responsible for the deaths of 20 Sunnis in two recent incidents in Baghdad. On July 10, Commandos reportedly took 11 Sunni men from their homes. Their bodies, which showed signs of torture, were discovered in Sadr City on July 12. It was reported on July 12 that 9 Sunnis suffocated in a van in which Commandos held them for hours. A survivor claims the men were also tortured. MoI initially denied any wrongdoing, but Minister Jabr announced on July 18 that the officers involved in the incident had been arrested and an investigation was pending. All the officers were subsequently released. MoI has yet to provide results from any of its investigations into alleged police abuses, and aside from officers being reassigned to other duties we have not seen any significant official punished for abuses. Deputy Minister of Human Rights Aida Osairan said she is convinced that MoI is complicit in acts of violence against the Sunni community but said Ministry of Human Rights employees resist investigating Shi'a-on-Sunni violations. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Recent incidents of what appears to be sectarian violence aimed at Sunnis have put the Ministry of Interior (MoI) on the defensive again (reftels). Increasingly, allegations point to complicity by MoI's Commando Unit (Moghawir) in this violence. In two separate incidents in a two-day span, the Commandos allegedly contributed -- either directly or indirectly -- to the deaths of up to 20 Sunnis in Baghdad.

13. (C) On July 14, several sources, including Adamiyah District Council member Dr. Riyadh Aladhadh and Sunni Waqf official Naji Ithawi, told EmbOffs that early on the morning of July 10, men in Commando and Iraqi National Guard (ING) uniforms broke into the Gareatt neighborhood homes of 11 Sunni men, and took them to an undetermined location. (NOTE: the ING, having been integrated into the Iraqi Army, no longer exists. However, it is still sometimes identified as such. END NOTE.) The Imam of the Malik Al Molk Mosque, Sheik Dhiya'aa Hamood al-Janabi, was one of the 11 taken from their homes. According to Ithawi, an eyewitness reported that an ING present during the raid told her, "We have been ruling the country for two months and we must exterminate you." The bodies of all 11 men were subsequently found on July 12 in the Al-Orphilly neighborhood in Sadr City. According to Ithawi, the victims' bodies showed signs of torture. (NOTE: Ithawi told PolFSN that he possesses a CD with pictures "too horrible to look at" of the bodies. Post is making arrangements with Ithawi to get the CD, as well as the names of all 11 victims. END NOTE.)

14. (C) On July 12, Iraqi press reported that 10 Sunnis in the custody of an MoI Commando Unit suffocated after being locked in a police van for hours. (NOTE: Coalition Forces confirmed that there were nine victims. END NOTE.) The victims had been accused of insurgent activity and were arrested at a Baghdad hospital where they were being treated for wounds allegedly incurred during an insurgent attack. A man who survived the incident claimed the police had held them for more than 12 hours; however, MoI officials said it had been only 2 hours. The survivor also alleged that the Commandos tortured him and the men with whom he had been held. MoI officials denied the allegations of torture and Minister of Interior Baqr Jabr told IRMO-MoI senior consultant on July 13 that the Commandos might have been unaware there would be no air circulation in the vehicle if was not running (septel). On July 18, Jabr announced the arrest of the officers involved in the incident and said an investigation was pending. However, a

reliable source told EmbOff on July 19 that all the officers had been released because "they could not be held accountable since they had not been properly trained in the use of the vehicle."

15. (C) In a separate meeting on July 17, Deputy Human Rights Minister Aida Osairan told PolOff she watched a press conference on the evening of July 16 during which Jabr denied the allegations of torture in this incident, claimed the Americans had given MoI the vehicle, and said the Commandos had not known air would not circulate if the engine was not running. According to Osairan, Jabr's statements, particularly with respect to the vehicle, came across as "finger pointing." (COMMENT: MNSTC-I has transferred several detainee transport vehicles to MoI, and it is likely one of these vehicles was involved. Despite Jabr's implication, it is unimaginable that the Commandos would not expect serious suffering by detainees locked in a closed vehicle in temperatures exceeding 110 degrees. END COMMENT.)

16. (C) Further, Osairan said she is convinced that the Moghawir and other components of MoI are, in fact, perpetrating human rights abuses. Osairan told PolOff that most of the abuse takes place on MoI's seventh floor, which she said is known in her Ministry as the "bad reputation floor." Osairan related an incident that the prison inspections team recently uncovered. A woman who was detained by the police, said Osairan, told this team of inspectors that she was brought to MoI HQ, where she was raped on three different floors of the building -- including the seventh -- by multiple men each time. Because of the societal stigma associated with this crime, the woman, who remains in custody, decided not to press the issue and her rapists were never punished. (Comment: Embassy IRMO advisors who are at the Ministry daily report to have seen no evidence of serious prisoner abuse on the Ministry's seventh floor. End Comment.)

17. (C) When PolOff asked Osairan what the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) is doing to address the MoI abuses she is convinced are taking place, Osairan responded that, while violations regarding Shi'a-on-Shi'a abuse are generally investigated, MoHR tends to ignore those complaints involving Shi'a-on-Sunni abuse. "They just do not want to do it," said Osairan, explaining that employees themselves are unable to objectively address such violations because of their own religious and ethnic orientations. When PolOff expressed concern about the sectarian nature of the very organization tasked with protecting the human rights of all Iraqis, Osairan quickly responded that the situation is getting better and that she is "taking care of it." (COMMENT: The Government has still not named a Human Rights Minister. While she appears to be very effective administratively, Osairan is not a strong leader, nor does she have the necessary strategic orientation to effectively guide MoHR forward as an "equal opportunity" protector of human rights. The Charge urged the Prime Minister on July 15 to name a Human Rights minister. The Prime Minister said such an appointment would be useful, but he has not found a suitable candidate willing to take the job yet. END COMMENT.)

SUNNI REACTION

18. (C) Sunni reaction to these incidents has been loud and clear. The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and the Sunni Waqf publicly condemned both incidents. The IIP called the suffocation incident "barbarian behavior" and urged human rights organizations to investigate the incident, saying those responsible should be punished. Sunni Waqf head Dr. Adnan al-Dulaimi called for an immediate investigation into the murders of the 11 Sunnis found in Sadr City, demanding that the results of the investigation be made available to the public. Al-Dulaimi also called on the Ministries of Justice and Human Rights to take a position on this case. Neither of them have publicly done so. MoHR did publish a statement on July 18 condemning "the accident" and claiming that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) employed techniques similar to those used by the former regime. However, the statement failed to identify the incident to which it was referring and did not provide any specific details. (NOTE: UK PolOFF said that Osairan told her on July 14 that Acting Human Rights Minister Narmin Othman told her to "keep quiet" about the suffocation incident after she saw MoHR's proposed press statement. END NOTE.)

19. (C) Aladhadh told PolOff that he has proactively

worked to cultivate relationships with ISF. While he has had some success with the ING, he complained that there are simply too many factions within MoI to effectively build such relationships. Sunnis are "living in a jungle," he said, and pointed out that many people are telling him they want to leave the country. There are two kinds of terrorism, said Aladhadh, that being carried out by the insurgents and the "official terrorism" MoI is conducting.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Our Sunni Arab interlocutors complain that they provide MoI with evidence of murder and torture perpetrated against Sunnis, but that MoI fails to act on this evidence. Interior Minister Jabr has consistently said the right things to us about the consequences the police will face if they commit human rights abuses. For example, he has ordered the removal of a brigade commander involved in human rights violations and asked the Prime Minister to form an independent investigative body. He appears committed to preventing human rights abuses, but substantive progress has been limited thus far. Importantly, while MoI may be investigating allegations of abuse in these and other cases, it certainly has not informed the Sunni community of any results, nor has it made public any disciplinary action taken. Incidents such as the May 5 murders of 14 Sunni farmers in Mad'ain (ref A), as well as the murders of Sunni clerics Sheik Hassan al-Naimi and Sheik Talal Nayef (ref B), remain unsolved. It is not clear if there ever was an investigation; certainly no results were ever released.

¶11. (C) Equally disturbing is Deputy Human Rights Minister Osarian's claim that MoHR -- the State's official protector of human rights -- is convinced of MoI's complicity in human rights abuses, yet looks the other way if it is directed at Sunnis. The Mission's elements will continue to press hard with the Ministry of Interior using specific examples when we get them, urging thorough investigations and punishment for those security officials guilty of abuses. END COMMENT.

¶12. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

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